

**Town of Arlington
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Tuesday, January 28, 2003 7:15 PM

Committee members present: Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Teresa DeBenedictis, Ralph Elwell, Larry Englisher, Lt. Jim McHugh, Scott Smith, Ed Starr, David Walkinshaw

Others present: Larry Slotnick (of ZipCar), Paolo Marinelli, Kurt Fischer, and Michael Kessman

Administrative Items

The minutes of 12/18 were approved unanimously.

Ed Starr reported that he would draft a write-up on TAC activities for the 2002 Town Book.

Scott Smith suggested we establish a mailing list of non-TAC members interested in TAC activities. Interested citizens, if they wish to receive agendas and minutes from TAC meetings, can ask to be on this mailing list. Committee members agreed that this was a good idea.

Zipcar

Michael Kessman arrived at 7:25 PM.

Larry Slotnick, fleet manager of Zipcar in Boston, gave a brief presentation on Zipcar. Zipcar is a private company that specializes in short term (hourly) rentals for urban dwellers. Major markets include zero-car families who occasionally need a car, 1-car families who occasionally need 2 cars, and businesses with occasional car needs. They currently have 3200 members in the Boston area with 106 cars in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge and Somerville. Rentals and billing are generally arranged via the Internet. They are considering expansion into Arlington. The advantage to the community of car sharing services such as Zipcar is that they enable households to own fewer cars, thus relieving parking pressures in residential areas. Also, lower levels of automobile ownership are associated with higher usage of other modes, such as public transit. In the future they will be aiming to have a mostly hybrid fleet. Possible car locations in Arlington include

- Arlington Center
- East Arlington (near Capitol Theater, or the hotel, or in the area near Alewife Station)
- Arlington Heights

Scott Smith suggested that Zipcar might be interested in the results of the Vision 2020 survey, which addresses auto ownership.

The Town can help in two ways:

- Provide parking in the right places. A street-level, above-ground location is preferred. Other communities have supported Zipcar by first providing a free parking space, and then letting the rent for that space gradually rise to market value.
- Help with publicity

David Walkinshaw arrived during this discussion.

Spring / Jason Street Intersection

David Walkinshaw presented a diagram showing the planned Jason/Pleasant View/Spring Street intersection. It includes:

- a traffic island at the southern end (bottom) of Jason
- curb extension on the west side of Jason, at Spring
- stop sign on Pleasant View as it enters Jason
- centerline that extends approximately 60 feet up Jason
- centerlines on Spring
- crosswalk on Spring, just west of the school bus stop and driveway

Note that a stop sign already exists at the southern end of Jason, and will remain.

The committee unanimously voted that this plan be recommended to the Board of Selectmen.

Pleasant Street

David Walkinshaw noted that due to the cold weather, work on the assessment of signs on the street would wait until the weather gets better. He also noted that 1/2 of the sidewalks were not shoveled, and that the pedestrian warning sign (PWS) at Maple is broken.

Ed Starr reported on our meeting with Ron Santosuosso on 1/24. Given the snow and ice, it will be difficult to do anything until the weather warms up. We might as well use a suitable permanent sign this spring, rather than trying a stopgap measure with the PWS.

David Walkinshaw departed after this discussion.

Michael Kessman introduction

Ed Starr introduced Mike Kessman to the rest of the committee, and Mike reported briefly on the work he has started to do.

Bishop School

Ed Starr reported that he spoke to Steve Carne, the principal. They agreed that the school would

- send a note to parents asking that they follow a particular pattern for drop-offs/pick-ups, and to only drop children off (and not run in for errands)
- ask staff not to park on Columbia,
- ask parents driving down Crosby to drop children off near the crossing guard.

This has been done.

Ed noted that the current two-way configuration on Columbia has a traffic calming effect. A part time one-way configuration would increase confusion, increase speed, and thus reduce safety. It is not recommended. Ed noted that more serious problems exist at the other schools, in particular Ottoson and Brackett. Elisabeth Carr-Jones asked about speeds on Crosby. Ed noted that because of the narrowing of the road due to snow, traffic on Crosby has been slowed. However, the area should be revisited during the next few months.

The committee unanimously agreed to convey the above solution to the Selectmen, and to recommend no action on the one-way street request. Ed Starr will draft a letter.

Massachusetts Avenue Corridor

Scott Smith reported on the items under consideration (numbers are those given in the Mass. Ave. Corridor handout):

1. Traffic signal, marking and signage improvements at Mass Ave. / Route 16. This is currently in Cambridge hands, and may see action in a few weeks. No vote is required, but we should inform the Selectmen, and the residents possibly via the Advocate.
2. Pedestrian warning signs at all existing crosswalks. This is current practice. No vote is required.
3. Advance yield lines and signs at existing crosswalks. Scott Smith moved, and the committee voted unanimously, that we recommend these to the Board of Selectmen, after obtaining Town Engineer concurrence.
- 7c. Pedestrian head on the east side of the Foster / Linwood signal. Scott Smith explained the current hazard: There is a crosswalk across Mass. Ave. on the east side of this intersection, but no pedestrian push-button or walk/don't walk sign. This invites pedestrians to cross on the vehicular green. However, the vehicular green is not long enough to permit safe crossing on foot. As this is a maintenance issue, no vote is required. Jim McHugh asked that Scott write a brief memo to be forwarded to Chief Maimone.
12. Thermoplastic crosswalks at least 10' wide. Scott Smith noted that the standard for crosswalk width seems to be at least 10' on arterials, as observed in both Cambridge and Brookline. Paolo Marinelli added that Cambridge also uses wide (2 foot) stripes.

Crosswalks

Larry Englisher reported on the activities of the crosswalk working group, and that the working group is concentrating on design standards for currently uncontrolled crosswalks. Teresa DiBenedictis stated that the Town would be seeking bids for crosswalk painting in the near future. We asked that she also obtain bids for thermoplastic, and she agreed. Teresa stated that Rich Bento's views on thermoplastic were as follows:

- cost 10 times as much, but last 4 to 5 times as long
- rips up over existing paint
- best on a new job.

Others on the committee stated that the visibility of thermoplastic is much greater, and hence thermoplastic is a more effective identifier for crosswalks compared to paint, particularly in the winter.

The working group will meet on 2/10 and consider guidelines that would impact this year's crosswalk painting. This will be an agenda item for 2/25.

Massachusetts Avenue Corridor (continued)

13. Traffic signal timing improvements. Scott Smith noted that signal timings should be checked as part of any major improvement to Mass. Ave. Specifically, in addition to the above-mentioned problem at Foster / Linwood, the green for Teel/Thorndike seems to be too long, given the low level of traffic. This is a maintenance issue, requiring no vote.

6. New crosswalk near Trowbridge Street, as requested by Leader Bank. Scott Smith reported that there is substantial pedestrian crossing activity in this area, and that putting a crosswalk near Trowbridge Street would serve a bus stop. The committee unanimously voted that a pedestrian crossing provision near Trowbridge should be included in the long-term plan. However, no crosswalk should be installed at this time given the hazards associated with uncontrolled crosswalks on busy multilane roads, and the potential for reduced pedestrian safety.

7a. New crosswalk near Harlow Street. Scott Smith noted that the same logic applies here as with the crosswalk at Trowbridge Street.

7b. Remove the existing crosswalk at Tufts Street. Scott Smith asked about this history of this crosswalk. Jim McHugh volunteered to speak with David McKenna. (Note: according to an e-mail received from Lt. McHugh after the TAC meeting, the crosswalk was requested by a funeral home across from Tufts Street, the police recommended against it, but the Selectmen overrode them.) Scott also noted that removal of this crosswalk should wait until after the light at Foster/Linwood is fixed (item 7c, above).

4. Enhance crosswalks via curb extensions

8. One-through lane in each direction with dedicated left turn lanes

9. Enhance crosswalks via refuge islands

Items 4, 8, and 9 are long-term items that will require funding. There was general agreement that these items were worth pursuing, and some discussion how to best move them forward with the Selectmen. A concern is that other items (such as the budget crisis) are now much more urgent in the eyes of town officials.

5. Move Lake Street bus stop. Scott Smith reported that the general consensus in the working group was not to move forward with this item now.

11, 10. Bicycle route markings or bike lanes. Scott Smith noted that inclusion of non-motorized (bicycle and pedestrian) improvements would make it easier to find funding, and recommended that bicycle improvements be designed in cooperation with the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Ed Starr suggested that the long-term items (4,8,9,10,11) be a topic of discussion at next month's TAC meeting.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

A few weeks ago, Paolo Marinelli had asked the Board of Selectmen why CDBG funds were being used to repair a fountain in Arlington Center, while apparently no funds were available for better crosswalk materials. He received a negative reaction from the board.

Ralph Elwell reported on how the CDBG process works. There is a CDBG subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen, consisting of Diane Mahon and Charles Lyons. CDBG runs on an annual cycle, and we can now make applications for next year's cycle. In the past, CDBG funds have been used for crosswalk improvements.

Teresa DeBenedictis noted that the fountain repair grant has already been contracted, so those funds are committed. Ralph Elwell moved that we apply for a grant for high visibility (thermoplastic) crosswalks. The committee approved this motion, with Jim McHugh abstaining.

and the others voting yes.

Pace Cars

Ralph spoke with three members of the Board of Selectmen. All three are willing to sign the pledge. There was general agreement that we will need to take a well-developed idea to the Selectmen.

Town Transportation News

Elisabeth Carr-Jones announced that there would be a public hearing on uses for the Symmes site on 2/13. She distributed a report from the consultants on current traffic conditions near the site.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

Handouts:

Agenda, draft town meeting warrant article, list of project priorities, Bishop School handout and draft letter – from Ed Starr

Minutes from December 18, 2002, Mass. Ave Corridor draft recommendations, Mass. Ave. Corridor summary document – from Scott Smith

ZipCar brochure – from Larry Slotnick

Symmes Hospital area report on current traffic conditions – from Elisabeth Carr-Jones